

Currently, more than 250,000 child soldiers suffer at the hands of exploitative, ruthless military commanders. Too often, their cries for help are stifled by poverty, ongoing armed conflict, and political instability; it is our responsibility to take up their cause and punish those who have participated in their torment to every extent possible.

There is wide-spread disagreement on the particulars of what might constitute justification for war or aggressive military action, but it is almost universally acknowledged that children should not be used as combatants in such conflicts.

The recruitment, enlisting, or conscripting of children in any armed force is unacceptable. Child soldiers face increased mortality rates as well as emotional and psychological damage that are often irreversible. The time has come for the United States to once again uphold justice and stand up for defenseless children who are at risk of losing their childhood, their families, and their physical and emotional well being.

The United States sent a clear and firm message condemning the use of child soldiers this week when we passed [Child Soldiers Accountability Act](#) (S. 2135). Passing S. 2135 is a significant step forward in holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, particularly in light of the fact that the United States has not yet ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children in any country deserve the same opportunity to succeed and thrive at life and I believe this bill will solidify our commitment to a higher moral standard.